

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 22, 2005

Contact: Julia Leikin (202) 775-3240

WASHINGTON - The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) and the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) invite you to a public briefing on Wednesday, July 27 on "U.S. Strategic Dilemmas in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan." The briefing will take place 3:00-5:00 p.m. in Room B1C on the B1 Conference Level at CSIS, 1800 K Street, NW, Washington, DC.

In April 2005, as part of its 2005 CPC recommendations to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, the Commission recommended that the State Department designate Uzbekistan a "country of particular concern" (CPC) for serious religious freedom violations. The Commission has recommended CPC status for Turkmenistan since 2001, although the State Department has not adopted that recommendation in past years. CPC designation carries with it the requirement to take follow-on policy actions, which can include the cancellation of economic and security assistance.

To place the CPC recommendation in context, panelists will discuss the human rights situation in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, the nature of local extremist and terrorist threats, and U.S. and other strategic interests in the region. The panel will open with introductory remarks by USCIRF Commissioners.

Panelists:

Stephen Blank , Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College

Daniel Kimmage , RFE/RL

Martha Brill Olcott , Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

Knox Thames , Helsinki Commission

Cory Welt , Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS)

Please RSVP by Tuesday, July 26 th, 2005

Julia Leikin (jleikin@csis.org) or by fax 202-775-3199

The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom was created by the International Religious Freedom Act of 1998 to monitor the status of freedom of thought, conscience, and religion or belief abroad, as defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and related international instruments, and to give independent policy recommendations to the President, the Secretary of State and the Congress.

Michael Cromartie

- Felice D. Gaer

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